

**Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, December 28, 1796,
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester
Ford.**

TO JOHN ADAMS¹

1 From the original in the possession of Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, of New York.

Monticello, Dec. 28, 1796.

Dear Sir, —The public & the papers have been much occupied lately in placing us in a point of opposition to each other. I trust with confidence that less of it has been felt by ourselves personally. In the retired canton where I am, I learn little of what is passing: pamphlets I see never: papers but a few; and the fewer the happier. Our latest intelligence from Philadelphia at present is of the 16th inst. but tho' at that date your election to the first magistracy seems not to have been known as a fact, yet with me it has never been doubted. I knew it impossible you should lose a vote north of the Delaware, and even if that of Pennsylvania should be against you in the mass, yet that you would get enough South of that to place your succession out of danger. I have never one single moment expected a different issue; & tho' I know I shall not be believed, yet it is not the less true that I have never wished it. My neighbors as my compurgators could aver that fact, because they see my occupations & my attachment to them. Indeed it is impossible that you may be cheated of your succession by a trick worthy the subtlety of your arch-friend of New York who has been able to make of your real friends tools to defeat their and your just wishes. Most probably he will be disappointed as to you; and my inclinations place me out of his reach. I leave to others the sublime delights of riding in the storm, better pleased with sound sleep and a warm birth below, with the society of neighbors, friends

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& fellow-laborers of the earth, than of spies & sycophants. No one then will congratulate you with purer disinterestedness than myself. The share indeed which I may have had in the late vote, I shall still value highly, as an evidence of the share I have in the esteem of my fellow citizens. But while in this point of view, a few votes less would be little sensible, the difference in the effect of a few more would be very sensible and oppressive to me. I have no ambition to govern men. It is a painful and thankless office. Since the day too on which you signed the treaty of Paris our horizon was never so overcast. I devoutly wish you may be able to shun for us this war by which our agriculture, commerce & credit will be destroyed. If you are, the glory will be all your own; and that your administration may be filled with glory, and happiness to yourself and advantage to us is the sincere wish of one who tho' in the course of our own voyage thro' life, various little incidents have happened or been contrived to separate us, retains still for you the solid esteem of the moments when we were working for our independence, and sentiments of respect & affectionate attachment.¹

¹ Statement by memory, of a letter I wrote to John Adams; copy omitted to be retained.

Monticello, Dec. 28, 1796.

Dear Sir,—The public, & the public papers, have been much occupied lately in placing us in a point of opposition to each other. I confidently trust we have felt less of it ourselves. In the retired canton where I live, we know little of what is passing. Pamphlets I see none: papers very few, & the fewer the happier. Our last information from Philade is of the 16th inst. At that date the issue of the late election seems not to have been known as a matter of fact. With me, however, its issue was never doubted. I knew the impossibility of your losing a single vote North of the Delaware; and even if you should lose that of Pennsylv in the mass, you would get enough South of that to make your election sure. I never for a single moment expected any other issue; & tho' I shall not be believed, yet it is not the less true, that I never wished any other. My neighbors, as my compurgators, could aver this fact, as seeing my occupations & my attachment to them. It is possible, indeed, that even

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you may be cheated of your succession by a trick worthy the subtlety of your arch friend of New York, who has been able to make of your real friends tools for defeating their & your just wishes. Probably, however, he will be disappointed as to you; and my inclinations put me out of his reach. I leave to others the sublime delights of riding in the storm, better pleased with sound sleep & a warmer berth below it, encircled with the society of my neighbors, friends, & fellow laborers of the earth, rather than with spies & sycophants. Still, I shall value highly the share I may have had in the late vote, as a measure of the share I hold in the esteem of my fellow citizens. In this point of view, a few votes less are but little sensible, while a few more would have been in their effect very sensible & oppressive to me. I have no ambition to govern men. It is a painful and thankless office. And never since the day you signed the treaty of Paris, has our horizon been so overcast. I devoutly wish you may be able to shun for us this war, which will destroy our agriculture, commerce, & credit. If you do, the glory will be all your own. And that your administration maybe filled with glory & happiness to yourself, & advantage to us, is the sincere prayer of one, who, tho' in the course of our voyage, various little incidents have happened or been contrived to separate us, yet retains for you the solid esteem of the times when we were working for our independence, and sentiments of sincere respect & attachment.